

they spoke predominantly, though, of these last years
when you and everyone knew you were dying;
they marvelled at your unabated humor,
at your utter perseverance in normality.

i am afraid, ron, that we were unstinting
in our efforts at commemoration,
so much so that it is only now, a full week later,
that this pen rides steadily upon this sea of white.

in closing let me say that i hope
the creative writing scholarship being established in
will produce a student able to come up with something ^{your name}
better than
"this sea of white."

in closing let me close with an inconclusive anti-climax:
a lot of people wish that you were still around.

BLIND LEADING BLIND

i was handing back some freshman papers
that i'd had graded by a new student assistant,

and while idly perusing his scribblings
i noticed first that he had vastly overrated them
and then that he was rather a poor speller himself
and then i read, "you write real clear!"

"jesus," i thought, but the student was already upon me,
so i handed her the paper, automatically intoning the
and espied, "you got some good ideas!" ^{next name,}

heart in stomach, i handed the paper over,
called the next name, and there it was,
big as china: "... HARDLY NO MISTAKES AT ALL!"

i distributed the rest of the papers in a sort of trance,
doing my best to keep my eyes from falling upon any
inwardly praying, "please god, don't let any of these kids ^{more of the comments,}
bring home their papers to their parents."

BUKOWSKI AT HIS BEST

he was sitting in the forty-niners tavern
after delivering a relatively sober noon-time reading
and he was bending over backwards to be gracious
to the students who had gathered there, a little
fearfully, to meet him.

when this fierce-faced young cadaver
bullied his way into a seat right next to him,
committed homicide upon the conversation
and re-cycled it to his own usages.

he told us all, but especially bukowski,
how he had started writing at an early age,
and how he'd filled his pockets with poems,
and then he'd filled his drawers with poems,

and then he'd gone to a pawn shop
where he had purchased a sea chest
and a hope chest and some contraption of the hopi indians
and he had filled them all with poems.

(at this point gordon the crazy bent my ear:
"i'm gonna have to hit him," he said;
"i'm gonna have to give him a prettier face."
"let him hang himself," i said.)

so the spectral youth went on about the poems in his
glove compartment and the poems in his trunk,
the poems in his safe deposit box, and a couple
thousand he had buried in his back yard.

finally he got to the point.
he had never shown his poems to anyone.
he didn't think the world was ready for them.
he had no respect for the intelligence of editors.

"what," he asked bukowski, "should i do with my poems?"

now all this time bukowski had been drawing back a bit,
to gain a little perspective, to size up the situation,
to figure out, in short, what the fuck this guy was up to.
now he uncoiled and thundered,

"burn them ... throw them in the fucking ocean
... piss on them ... shit on them ...
do anything, as long as we are spared them.
then, start over."

there are moments, though they are few and far between,
when you wish that there were more bukowski.

-- Gerald Locklin

Long Beach CA